

A
LETTER
TO A
FRIEND
FROM A
MERCHANT

Who had Resided many Years at

LEGHORN:

Giving an Account of the METHODS
taken by that State to prevent In-
fection.

Together with the Author's THOUGHTS
what we ought to do at this Conjunction,
in order to preserve our HEALTH and
TRADE.

L O N D O N,

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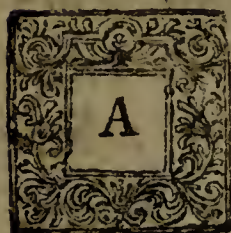




A
L E T T E R
F R O M A
Merchant at *LEGHORN*.

S I R,

Nov. 17. 1721.



According to your Request, I herewith send you a distinct Account of the Methods used at *Leghorn* in relation to the *Health-Office*. The Great Duke of *Tuscany*, whose Interest it is to study the Conveniency of the Merchants, and yet not neglect all proper Means to secure the Health of his Subjects, has chosen from among the Senators of *Florence*, many of whom have been Traders, a

certain Number, who are called the *Council of Health*. These Persons assemble together, as occasion calls, to consider of proper Methods to prevent any Infection being brought into the Country from foreign Parts; and have Officers belonging to them, and under their Direction, who are placed at all the Sea-Ports, and also on the Frontiers by Land, when any of their Neighbours lie under a Suspicion of Contagion.

As *Leghorn* is the principal Port of Trade in the Prince's Territories, to and from which Place a continual Traffick is carried on with all Parts of *Turkey* and *Barbary*; a *Health Office* is established there, under the Care of a Supreme, who is stiled *Captain of the Bocca*, and two Inferiours, whose Business it is to go off at all times in a Boat belonging to this Office, with six or eight Men, to every Vessel that comes into Port. When they arrive (as the Sailors term it) along side the Ship, the Sitting-Officer demands of the Captain whence he comes,

comes, how long he has been in his Passage, what Patent, or Bill of Health he brings, and whether all be well aboard. If to these Questions he gives a satisfactory Answer, that is, if he says he has a clean Patent, that all are well aboard, and that he comes from any Part of Christendom, he is admitted to come to the *Prattick House*; the Officer first sending one of his Boatmen aboard to count his Men, and see if the Number agrees with the Patent: which Boatman remains aboard until the Captain procures *Prattick* at the Office, which is built on the Sea-shore, so that a Ship's Boat can lay afloat.

Being at the *Prattick-House*, the Captain delivers his Bill of Health to an Officer, sticking it at the End of a cleft Stick. The Officer then makes a Fire of damp Straw and Pouder of Brimstone, over which he smoaks the Patent, which they esteem a sufficient Purgation. It is then examined and compared with the Deposition of the Captain, who also swears he has spoke with no *Algerine*,

gerine, nor any other Ship coming from Places infected.

This being performed, he is admitted to come ashore immediately, and his Ship to come into the Mole, which there delivers her Cargo; the Boatman who was first sent aboard being discharged as soon as *Prattick* is given the Master. But if the Ship proves to be one from any Port in *Turkey* or *Barbary*, and altho she brings a clean Patent, yet the Goods on board the said Ship are liable to a Quarantain, as well as the Master and Mariners. They then proceed in this manner: The Ship has immediately on her Arrival two Guards put aboard her, and is permitted to lie in the Mole with the other Ships who are not in Quarantain. The Merchant at his Charge sends two Lighters with two Men, to unload the Ship immediately; and under the Care of a Guard the Ship-boat tows the Lighter into the *Lazaretto*, which is a Place set apart for the Reception of such Goods, and is so near the Town as to be Part of the Fortification

tification thereof. When the Ship is discharged of all her Loading, the Quarantain then commences, from the day of her last Delivery, as do likewise the Goods in the *Lazaretto*, and also the Lighters and Boatmen who were employed in the Discharge of the Ship.

The *Lazaretto* is governed by a supreme Officer, called Captain, who has for his Assistant a Secretary, who enters down all the Goods there received, and gives the Captain of the Ship who brought them Credit for them. There is a Gang of Porters, whose business it is to land these Goods, and lay such of them as will take Damage by Wet under Sheds, which are open on one side, being built on Pillars. The other Goods not liable to damage, such as Wax, Tallow, Lead, Copper, or the like, are lain in the open Air, to make the more room for fine Goods. These just mentioned, with some few others of the like nature, may be taken out of the *Lazaretto*. In a day or two after they are landed, their Package, if of any sort of Canvas

Canvas or Hair, being taken off, and the Goods thrown into Water by the Porter attending the other Part of the Loading, which consists perhaps of Linens, Cotton, Wool, and Yarn, Flax, Saffron, Galls, Tobacco, Goats-Hair, Sheeps-Wool, and the like, are ript open by the Porters, all but the Galls and Tobacco; and so exposed as much as may be, without prejudice to the Goods.

In this manner they lie from twenty to twenty five Days, hardly ever more, when by Order from the Supreme Council above, they are admitted into Town, at which time the Merchant sends his Servant, with an Order from the Captain of the Ship to the Captain of the *Lazaretto* to deliver the Goods: He takes with him Porters who are not in Quarantain, but belong to the Town; for it's likely the Porters who received these Goods, and deposited them in their Places, are employ'd on some other Loading come in since the former, and so have begun a fresh Quarantain. And
this

this they sometimes practise for Years together, being never out of Quarantain. The Dues paid by the Merchant for his Goods lying in the *Lazaretto* do not amount to above one half *per Cent.* on the Valuation; and those Goods which are permitted to be taken out, upon shifting their Package, pay only half the Duties.

If there be any Passengers aboard the Ship, they are permitted to go immediately to the *Lazaretto* before the Ship is deliver'd, and commence their Quarantain, being lodged in an Apartment by themselves under a Guard, who never leaves them; but if they want to take the Air in any Part of the *Lazaretto*, or any Friend comes to see them, the Guard attends them, and they are permitted to discourse with any one, keeping at a proper distance, about ten or twelve Foot from each other.

The *Lazaretto* is an Island surrounded with a deep Ditch, and a Draw-Bridge at its Entrance, which every Night at Sun-set is drawn up, and a Guard placed

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there night and day to examine all Persons who go in, and see that they be under the Care of a proper Person, who carries them whither their Business calls them. The Passengers commonly perform as long a Quarantain as the Goods; but if they will strip themselves of all their Clothes, and can bear being shut into a close Room, and kept there a short space, with wet Straw lighted; they are admitted to *Prattick* five or ten days sooner, having first past the Examination of a Physician who belongs to the *Health-Office*, and searches those Parts where the Distemper generally shows it self. If a Ship comes from the *Levant* loaden with Corn, Wine, or Fruit, she is permitted to unload, and the Goods to come immediately into the Town, altho the Ship and Men must perform a Quarantain; and in such case a Guard is sent from the *Health-Office* with the Boat, to see that the Boatmen do not communicate with the Men of the Ship, but only take the Goods as they are handed down

down to them. All Corn is stowed loose, and shot so into the Boat.

I come now to the third Degree or Order observed as to Ships coming from Places infected. When Ships bring a foul Patent, great Caution and Circumspection is used : for as soon as the Officer whose Business it is to go off and examine her, finds she has a foul Patent, he does not suffer his Boat so much as to touch the Ship, but examining the Captain at a distance as to the Health of all aboard, if he finds they are well, he orders the Captain to come to the *Prattick-House*, and lie off at a distance, to be examined by the supreme Officer; which Examination is taken down in Writing, and sent to *Florence*, and laid before the *Council of Health*, for them to determine what is to be done : and in the meantime the Captain puts to his Boat, so as to receive a Guard, and goes off, attending an Answer from *Florence*, which generally comes next day ; for they are very cautious not to make frivolous Delays, which cause great Loss and Da-

mage to the Merchant, unless there be very great Reason for it. The Answer is, to let the Ship remain in Port, and to open her Hatches, taking upon her upper Deck what Goods she can conveniently, and air the Ship as much as possible, by opening her Ports and Hatches. These Goods thus lie for ten Days in open Air; and if in that time, upon Examination, they find the People in good Health on board, they permit the Ship to unload, and her Cargo is carried to a further *Lazaretto*, designed to receive such Goods as come from Places infected, and which is about a Mile out of the Town. Here the same Rule is observed as to their disposing the Goods, as in the other *Lazaretto*; the only Difference is, that they lie forty Days. The Passengers are also treated after the same manner, save that they are not admitted to go immediately to the *Lazaretto*, but must stay on board the ten Days the Goods are airing, to see, I presume, whether they all continue in good Health during the time the Goods

Goods are airing aboard the Ship ; and she is obliged to continue out in the Road, and not permitted to come into the Mole, where the other Ships lie, till she has taken out a Boat-Load or two of Goods : but after that, if all remain well aboard, she is ordered into the Mole, and lies among the other Ships, using some Caution not to let any other Ship touch them.

If any Ship coming from Places infected happen to have the Sicknefs aboard, or have buried any of their Men in the Voyage of the Plague, such Ships are ordered to depart in 24 Hours. They send them some Refreshments, which they leave upon a Rock ; and in case they are not gone by the next day, the Town fires them out of Port. The Laws respecting the Health are so rigorously observed, that if any Captain be found to make a false Report to the Officer, it is immediate Death : and I remember once in my time, one Capt. *Hedges*, who came to *Leghorn* from *England*, fearing he should not have Prattick
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if he confest he had spoken with an *Algerine* Cruiser, concealed it from the Office : but some of his Men whom he had disoblighd, informing them of it, an Order was issued out to secure him : but he having by some means got notice, escaped aboard, and saved his Life. They hanged him however *in effigie*, and issued out a *Bando*, wherein he is condemned to be shot by any man whenever he is seen in that Country. I once saw my self a *German* Count shot on the Frontiers of the *Venetian* Territories, for having concealed from the Health-Office that he came from a Place which was under Suspicion of Contagion.

The Great Duke has a Guard of light Horse to patroul all Night along the Sea-Coast, not only to prevent any *Barbary* Rovers from landing, but also any others who have not *Prattick*.

With these Precautions, and by the good Providence of God, *Italy* has not felt the Effects of any Contagious Distemper for many Years. Give me leave now to lay before you some of my own Thoughts

Thoughts how to prevent the Plague's being communicated to us by our Neighbours.

We are all of us sensible that the inordinate Love of Gain is the Root of all Evil ; and while such large Profit is made by running of Goods from *France*, there will be no way to prevent it, unless our Legislature for a time enact a Law, making it Death for any man to be taken running of Goods, or even landing from *France*, without applying himself to the proper Officer : for it is easy to believe that if the Plague should ever reach *Bourdeaux*, or any part of the Coast of *France*, the People will be all flying hither as to a Place of Safety. I also conceive it is high time for us to prohibit all Commerce with that Kingdom, and not to suffer any from thence to come into our Ports. My Reason for it is this, that if you exempt any Port, Goods will be brought from the other Ports to that ; and so taking out fresh Clearings, we are imposed upon, as I am informed was practised : when *Bourdeaux* was a Quarantain,

tain, all the Wine, and even Kidskins, were carried to *Calais* ; there they got fresh Clearing, and enter'd here without Quarantain. It would be safest for us if all Intercourse of Letters were stopt ; but if that be thought too hard, great Care ought to be taken of the Packets, that no Person be permitted to come on shore without going to some proper Place to perform a Quarantain ; and all the Letters either dipped in Vinegar immediately on their landing, or else open'd and smoaked, and then sealed up again.

I cannot conceive any reason for the Government's subjecting all the *Mediterranean* to a Quarantain, since by what I have said, it's evident no People can act with more Caution than the *Italians* do ; and what I have said of *Leghorn*, may serve for all other Parts of *Italy*. Besides, in many Parts the *French* have no manner of Trade. I question whether a Ship from *France* was ever known to go to *Venice*, no more than loading Currants at *Zant* : but 'tis evident

dent by the several Rules published by the *Spanish* and *Italian* Ministers, to be observed by all Ships from hence; that they are as careful as we can be; and they ought not to be set on a level with a Kingdom infected. However, if our wise Men will still go on as they have began, the next Step is to endeavour to make the Matter easy to them and the Merchant. I therefore propose that a Health-Officer be appointed in all our Ports, who may be the Customhouse-Officer: This Man to practise somewhat after the same manner as we do at *Leghorn*; and where he finds a difficult Case, write up to the Board of Health, which Board I would have consist of Men of Understanding, and who have the Exercise of their Reason, and not a parcel of old Women, touchy, perverse and peevish, who with their affected State shall make a Man, as good, and perhaps wiser than themselves, dance Attendance from day to day, till his Patience is tired. These Commissioners should give daily Attendance, and dis-

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patch

patch all Matters that come before them before they break up, unless in some perplexed Cases; but they should never be above three Days deliberating on any Point.

As the principal Part of the Trade of this Kingdom is brought to this City, so I will lay down a few Rules, which, if approved of, would very much tend to the Security of the Kingdom, and Ease of the Merchant.

Upon the Arrival of any Ship in the *Downs*, which is liable to a Quarantine, I would have the Health-Officer go off, and act as is practised at *Leghorn*, which is easy enough to be done; and having her Officers aboard, be permitted to come into the *Hope*; and being there arrived, if it be a Ship that comes with a clean Patent, let him unload immediately, and send up to *London* what Goods he has that are not liable to Infection, and let the other go to the *Lazaretto*. And to save the Nation a fresh Expence of 5 or 6000 *l.* to build new Barracks, I propose that *Tilbury-Fort* be made

made a *Lazaretto* ; it's a Place cut out as it were for such a Design, and being now garison'd by Invalids, those very Men will serve for Porters, and also do duty at the Gates, to see that Order be observed. When the Ships are unloaden, they should commence their Quarantain, which should be no longer than is consistent with Reason ; and it should be in the breast of the Board of Health to assign the time, without being obliged to petition the King and Council, and put to the charge of 15 l. for every Ship before she can have *Prattick*. Certain Fees should be fixed, beyond which no one should be obliged to pay, and not be made to dance Attendance from day to day, as is now practised.

The Place they have now pitched upon of *Stangate-Creek*, is the most improper of any they could chuse, being in a low unhealthy Air, apt to breed Agues and Fevers, and therefore unfit for People that come from Sea to lie forty Days in : The Land adjoining is often overflowed with Spring Tides, so that the

Barracks they have built there were at first two Foot under Water, the Floor I mean; whereupon it was raised eighteen Inches, and the Floor is now so near the Tiling, that there is scarce room to put any thing under, except a Bale of Silk, or the like; which being continually damp and moist, by reason of the constant Overflowings of the Tide, is very improper to lay Silk in, whose Gloss being once gone, the Value is very much lessen'd.

There ought, I think, to be a Place assigned to those Ships who come with a foul Patent, but have brought their Complement of Men in Health. I should make no difficulty to admit them also into the *Hope*, observing the Rules practised at *Leghorn*; but lest that should not go down with some tiresome People, let them be sent to *Stangate Creek*: and, as it's probable there will not be many of this sort, the Barracks that are there built, may serve to hold their Cargoes.

As to the third Degree, of Ships having the Plague aboard, I am at a loss what to do with them. Methinks it's cruel to turn to the merciless Element those who survive; and yet it's highly prudent to cause the Ship to be burnt: for should she be fired out of any Port, Desperation would make them go to some other, and sink their Ship, and so get on shore, and be received as Men shipwreck'd; which might be of evil Consequence. It therefore behoves us to guard well against this Danger, and to find out some proper Island, where the Men may be fed and clothed: I should think it the best way to send the Ship thither, and sinking her at a proper distance from the Harbour, the Men may come ashore stript of all their Clothes, which might be left in the Boat, and burnt together with it on the Beach. For instance, there is an uninhabited Island near *Plimouth*, called *Drake-Island*, where Tents may be pitch'd at a small Charge, and where infected Persons may land, and Provisions be sent to them,

them, without any danger of communicating the Disease to any one.

I have thus given you as brief an Account as I could of our Methods used at *Leghorn*, and also my own Thoughts how we might govern our selves here; but there is so much of private Interest carried on in all Affairs relating to the Publick, that I question whether all that can be said will any ways influence our great Men to take other Resolutions than what just suits their narrow Understandings. Yet hoping this may be of some service to my Country, at least that 'twill be satisfactory to you, I have taken the trouble to collect together my Thoughts, and am sincerely,

S I R,

Your's, &c.

F I N I S.